



Protect Yourself, Protect Your Family, Protect Your Community - Immunize!

Facts about Immunizing Against Influenza (Flu) and Pneumococcal (Pneumonia)

- About 36,000 Americans die on average per year from the complications of flu.
- In 2005, over 2000 older adults died from flu and pneumonia in North Carolina.
- Flu and pneumonia together represent the fifth leading cause of death among adults aged 65 and older in the U.S.
- African Americans are three to five times more likely to develop life-threatening invasive pneumonia disease than Caucasians.
- Based on the 2004 Medicare claims data from The Carolinas Center for Medical Excellence, flu immunization rate in North Carolina is 34% for the general population and 20% for the African American population.
- Lower flu immunization rates for African Americans, reiterates the need to develop adult immunization programs that address health disparities in immunization.
- Residents of long term care facilities are particularly vulnerable to flu and flu-related complications.
- **Medicare part B reimburses fully for both flu and pneumonia vaccination.**
- Nationwide, there will be more vaccine available this season – as compared to previous flu seasons.

Relevance

- **For Consumers: (Urgency – High)**
 - ❖ Flu season can begin in October and lasts as late as May.
 - ❖ **October or November is the best time to get vaccinated, but getting vaccinated in December or later can be beneficial.**
 - ❖ The flu vaccine does not cause flu.
 - ❖ The vaccine to protect against pneumonia disease is safe and effective. It can be given at any time during the year.
 - ❖ Immunization against flu and/or pneumonia reduces the risk of (1) hospitalization for chronic conditions and (2) death from flu or pneumonia related complications in older adults with chronic health problems.
- **For Service Providers: (Urgency-High)**
 - ❖ Only 36% of healthcare personnel, especially hospital and long term care facility staff, are immunized against flu each year.
 - ❖ The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other leading healthcare organizations recommend that immunizing health care staff against flu, reduces the likelihood of virus transmission to high risk population and improves quality of care for patients.

Questions for Aging Leadership Planning Team

- To what extent does the county aging program promote adult immunization?
- Does the county aging program organize on-site immunization clinics at senior centers, community centers, malls, and other sites easily accessible by older adults? Is there a program that provides immunization services to the homebound older adults?
- What is done to encourage immunizing healthcare staff who work in hospitals or long term care facilities?
- Are members of the community aware of the benefits of immunization for older adults? If not, what plans does the county aging program have to raise awareness on immunization issues?
- Does the county aging program work with local health departments in defining and carrying out immunization priorities for older adults?

Recommended Strategies

- Hold immunization clinics at convenient locations for older adults including senior centers, senior housing developments, malls, and community centers.
- Organize a mobile health unit and/or partner with programs such as Meals-on-Wheels to provide information, educational material, and immunization to homebound older adults.
- Collaborate with staff at local health departments to ensure seamless delivery of immunization services for older adults.
- Raise awareness using varied media outlets such as print and broadcast (radio and TV).
- Build capacity of organizations and agencies that work with older adults to offer on-site vaccinations for staff and patients.

Resources

- Contact your state immunization branch at <http://www.immunizenc.com> for the latest North Carolina updates on immunization. You can also contact them by phone at 919-707-5550 or by email at ImmlInfo@ncmail.net for additional resources and the latest updates on immunization.
- Information about local flu clinics or the Flu Clinic Finder can be obtained from [The Carolinas Center for Medical Excellence](#)
- Visit the following site to read about the recommended adult immunization schedule:
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5440-Immunization.pdf> .

References:

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3. "Stay Healthy and Active! Vaccinate: Fact Sheet for Health Care Professionals." Produced by the Immunization Branch, Division of Public Health, Department of Health & Human Services, State of North Carolina, July 2003.
4. Surveillance for Certain Health Behaviors among States and Selected Local Areas – Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (2006 July) *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 55.
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5. Recommended Adult Immunization Schedule – United States, October 2005-September 2006 (2005 October), *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 54. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5440-Immunization.pdf>
6. "Immunization: Promoting Prevention for a Healthier Life." National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, Campaign Kit, 2006. <http://www.nfid.org/pdf/publications/naiaw06.pdf>